

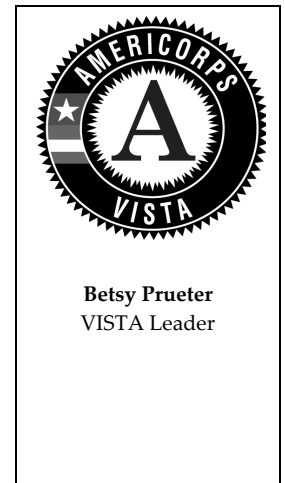


DPI VISTA Monthly

DECEMBER 2007

Nothing liberates our greatness like the desire to help,
the desire to serve.

-Marianne Williamson



ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

I recently participated in a teleconference sponsored by Public Allies on how to building capacity and increasing organizational performance. Based on the research of Phil Bartle of the Uganda Community Management Program, they have identified 16 essential components to increasing capacity in your organization (or school! or agency!). I've selected 9 to feature below.

1. ALTRUISM

Individuals should be allowed and encouraged to use their gifts to benefit the organization.

2. COMMON VALUES

Members need to share, or at least understand each others values and attitudes to make a strong organization.

3. COMMUNICATION

This doesn't just mean speaking to the families and school staff you work with (though that's important!). But utilize a variety of tools- email, newsletters, radio, internet, etc.

4. CONFIDENCE

You need to have faith in the ability of your organization to make a difference. Your passion should be in the work that you do!

5. LEADERSHIP

We all know this one is important! The stronger the leader, the stronger the organization. VISTAs are leaders and your role in increasing capacity is crucial.

6. ORGANIZATION

Each member of an organization needs to have a role in that organization. They should know what that role is and see how it fits in the "bigger vision."

7. SKILLS

Basically, this means use your assets! And the assets of those you work with. Find out what people are good at and utilize those skills for the benefit of your site.

8. TRUST

This is where team building comes in. Trust in each other and in the organization is essential to a strong agency. VISTAs should be building trust with those they work with in an effort to do their work more effectively!

9. UNITY

Establishing a culture of tolerance in the workplace will increase capacity. You should be celebrating the differences and similarities you share

Betsy



Birthday this month

Be sure to send some birthday wishes!

Shanna Russell Hammond

(12/18)

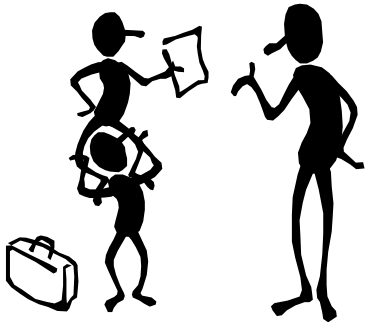
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CONNECTING YOUR PARTNERSHIPS



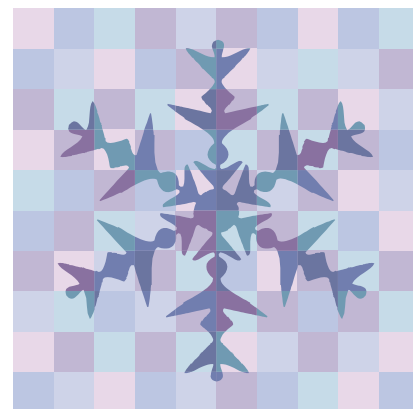
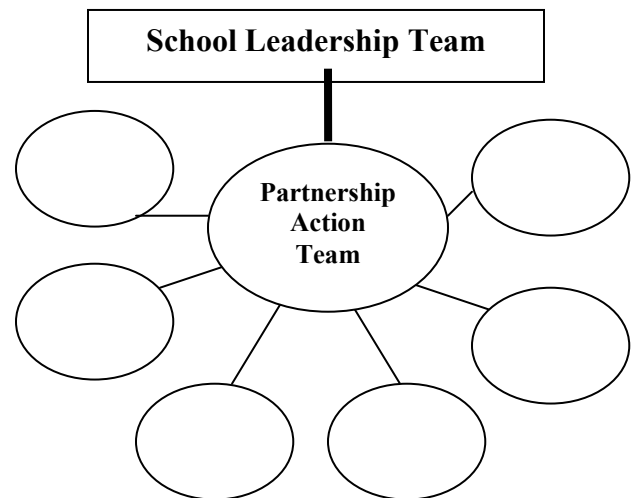
By Ruth Anne Landsverk

Among the tougher tasks an effective partnership action team faces is the ever-present challenge of keeping partnership goals and activities connected to the larger, ongoing goals of the school. It's easy to come up with a whole roster of wonderful partnership activities such as school open house, family learning nights, parent group meetings, etc. It's more difficult to keep all of the various groups in your school that deal with families -- Title I, REACH, special education, PTA, to name a few -- informed about and contributing to partnership efforts. Below are two tools your Partnership Action Team may find useful to help members keep track of "who's doing what" and connecting them to school-wide student goals for student learning and well-being (*standard size versions of these documents are attached to the end of this newsletter*).

Make it a priority for your Action Team to communicate to other school groups what it's planning to do, what it's done, and how it furthers student learning and other school goals. We're all in this together!

QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What groups in your school community work with families?
2. What major activities or events do they conduct for or with families?
3. What grants, programs, or initiatives is the Group funded by or connected to (i.e., Title program, NCLB, special education, REACH, VISTA)?
4. What important annual school goal(s) do they help achieve (i.e., improve student math achievement, attendance, school environment)?
5. Who will report on the Partnership Action Team's activities to other groups? Who will report on the other Groups' activities to the Action Team? How or in what form (i.e., report via e-mail, in person, etc.)?
6. How often/when does the Group meet?
7. In what ways could the Partnership Action Team work with other groups to support family involvement in children's learning? How could other groups help the Action Team achieve its goals? What resources can be shared?



INTERVIEW WITH A VISTA

SHANNA ANSWERS JEN'S QUESTIONS



Jen: What is one thing you want to achieve in your life more than anything else?

Shanna: To always be happy, and to have very few opportunities where I look back and say "If only I had done..."

Jen: What is your proudest moment?

Shanna: My proudest moments continue to happen. I worked my way through college, living out on my own and paying my own bills since I was eighteen. And, as a first generation graduate from a four-year university, I hope I'm setting a positive role model for my five younger siblings. I think I am because the two oldest, both nineteen, are currently enrolled in their local community college.

Jen: Describe the last 5 years of your life. Work, places you've lived, interesting people you have met.

Shanna: Too much has happened in the last five years to describe in detail. I've had a variety of jobs, from working in the Emergency Room at St. Vincent Hospital when I was twenty-one and thought I wanted to be a nurse, to more recently working as a Meal Supervisor at the local homeless shelter when I knew I was going to be a nutritionist. Now of course, I'm a VISTA.

Jen: What hobbies do you have?

Shanna: I like to bike, cook, read, and eat; but now that I'm pregnant I feel like I pretty much just do the last two.

Jen: Are you a fruity candy person or a chocolate candy person?

Shanna: Now, that's a tough one. People often think that because I studied nutrition I'm not supposed to like candy at all, but that's far from the truth. I studied nutrition because I love food, cooking it, eating, talking about it... So, if I absolutely had to choose, I'd need more information. Fruity chewy? Fruity hard? Dark chocolate? Chocolate with nuts? The possibilities are endless.

Jen: When is the acceptable time to begin decorating for Christmas, listening to Christmas music, baking cookies, etc?

Shanna: You know, it really doesn't bother me either way when people start getting their Christmas on.

Jen: What is your favorite article of clothing?

Shanna: Lately, I feel as though my belly's getting larger daily, so I'm gonna have to go with sweat pants.

Jen: In a fight who would win? Spiderman or Superman?

Shanna: You know I can't imagine a scenario when these two would have to fight each other, but if it did happen I'd put my money on Superman.

Jen: Why be a VISTA?

Shanna: It seemed like a great opportunity to get more involved in my community, and the Education Award was able to dispel any doubts I might have had.



JEN ANSWERS SHANNA'S QUESTIONS



Shanna: I know I've heard some things about your background, but I'm not sure if I remember everything correctly. Am I right in thinking that you were in Colorado working in the area of environmental education before you decided to become a VISTA and relocate to Wisconsin? If that is true, could you provide a little more detail?

Jen: I graduated from Carthage College in Kenosha in May 2007 and then accepted a job as a naturalist from the Gore Range Natural Science School in Vail, Colorado. It was an amazing summer in the mountains. I was there for 3 months and then at the end of August I moved to Estes Park Colorado to be an Environmental Education ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park. Classes from the front range would come to the park for fieldtrips and I would be the leader/teacher for the trip. Sadly both of these jobs were seasonal and I missed the mid-west so I decided to make the move back to Wisconsin.

Shanna: If you had to pick just three words to describe yourself, what would they be?

Jen: Sassy, friendly, and laid back.

Shanna: Who inspires you?

Jen: It may sound like a cliché, but both of my parents truly inspire me. My dad is the most supportive person I have ever met. No matter what decisions I have made in my life he has supported me 100%. He also the hardest working person I have ever met. My mom inspires me because at around 40 years old she decided she was going back to school to be an x-ray technician. At the time I was a full time college student and she was living on one income. It was a really difficult time for her, but she was a straight A student and

graduated with honors. They are both the best role models I could have ever asked for.

Shanna: What made you decide to join AmeriCorps VISTA?

Jen: At the beginning of my senior year of college I decided that I wanted to join the Peace Corps. However, at the end of my college career I decided that I wasn't ready to go overseas for two years by myself. I realized that I still had some growing to do. So I decided that AmeriCorps would be a great program as well. Not only would I be closer to my family, but I would be doing a lot of good for the state that was so good to me all throughout college. So here I am.

Shanna: Do you celebrate the holiday season in any way? If so, the VISTA budget's really tight, how will you manage this year?

Jen: My family celebrates Christmas with a decent sized get together with lots of food and time to open presents. Coming off of being a poor college student I'm doing things similar to other years. I buy for my nephew/godson and my new niece. That was going to be all, but I recently learned to crochet and I'm becoming quickly obsessed, so quite a few scarves will be handed out this year as well.

Shanna: I'm food obsessed, so I'd like to know what your favorite food is and why, and what your least favorite food is and why.

Jen: I am an Iowa girl through and through. My favorite meal is pork chops and corn on the cob. I grew up with this meal and it has stuck with me as one of my favorites (they have to be Iowa chops though!). Hmmmm, I love food and love to eat so I'm not sure that I have a least favorite food, but if I had to pick one I would say onions. I can eat them if they are cooked, but raw they are too intense and picking them off does not work. The nasty onion taste takes over everything just by touching my sandwich

Shanna: What are your hobbies?

Jen: I love hiking, rock climbing, snowshoeing, fishing, swimming, reading, watching movies, playing with my nephews and niece, spending time with friends, and newly crocheting!

Shanna: So far, does your VISTA experience seem similar to any other work experience you've had in the past?

Jen: I would have to say that so far this is a very unique experience for me. That being said I am newly out of college so I have a lot of jobs to experience yet!

Shanna: Do you have an all-time favorite song that you just have to crank up and sing along with, when it comes on?

Jen: Well I don't think it is my all-time favorite song, but whenever I hear the Cake cover of *I Will Survive* I have to crank it and scream along (I don't really sing).

Shanna: What's your dream job?

Jen: I have so many dreams it is impossible to pick just one. But acting on a live stage is one along with being a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador.

New Wisconsin Promise Conference

January 15th and 16th, Madison

Action Team Follow-Up Training

January TBD

Supervisor Teleconference

January TBD

Action Team Web Conference (NNPS)

January 23rd 1:30-2:30

Fundamentals of Family Involvement Training

January 31st 8am-4pm, CESA 2 and CESA 12



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NEXT MONTH

Carolyn Wood and Seth Frye



THE "HEY! THAT'S A GOOD IDEA" CORNER

BETSY PRUETER

On every bi-weekly report, I read about fantastic ideas generated by our VISTAs. I thought I would take time every month to highlight some of them. This gives us a chance to celebrate our successes and share promising practices!

1. **Dan Touredot** at CESA 9 developed a Building a Birdhouse curricular project that will help teachers engage parents and students in an interactive, hands on activity that emphasizes science and statistics concepts.

2. **Melanie Brooks** is actively recruiting community members to be a part of Neeskara Elementary's Action Team in Milwaukee! She has made contact with the local alderman and invited him to be a member. Remember, community representatives are key to the success of the ATP!



*Save
the
Dates*

Building the Heart of Successful Schools

December 6th and 7th, Wisconsin Dells

VISTA Wisline Web: Building Capacity

December 12, 1pm-2pm

Service Learning WisLine Web:

December 18th 9am-1pm

Quarterly Report due

January 15th by 5pm

3. **Michael Castaneda** has recently partnered his site, Kosciuszko Montessori and Middle School, with Rocky Rococo's Reading Recognition program where students are given stickers for each book they read to exchange for discounts at Rocky Rococo restaurants.

4. **Lacey Donatell** has been working to establish a mentoring program for Spooner Middle and High School students. Students would be matched with alumni attending 4- year, 2-year, and technical schools in the area. Students would be encouraged to utilize their "buddy" for homework assistance as well as post-secondary advice.

5. **Cathy Knott** has developed a template bulletin insert to be circulated to local churches in Sparta, seeking volunteers. This is a great way to recruit and get the word out about your work!

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

National Network of Partnership Schools



Funding Opportunities

Toyota Family Literacy Teacher of the Year Award

The National Center for Family Literacy and Toyota is looking for the Family Literacy Teacher of the Year! This award is given to educators who have shown extraordinary efforts to help families achieve both academic and non-academic goals.

Maximum Award: \$5,000

Eligibility: Teachers who work with family literacy-type programs

Deadline: December 5, 2007

http://www.famlit.org/site/c.gtJWJdMQIsE/b.2014417/k.CBF7/Toyota_Family_Literacy_Teacher_of_the_Year_Award.html

The National Center for Family Literacy Verizon Tech Savvy Awards

The National Center for Family Literacy is looking for nominees for its Verizon Tech Savvy Award. The awards recognize programs that teach parents about current technology and enable them to better guide their children in the use of new media.

Maximum Award: \$25,000

Eligibility: 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations,

including community-based nonprofits, libraries and schools

Deadline: January 11, 2008

<http://www.famlit.org/site/c.gtJWJdMQIsE/b.2180327/>

Littlest Volunteers Contest

The Walt Disney Company, in conjunction with Wondertime Magazine, is searching for stories about teaching young children the joys of volunteering. Volunteers who share their experiences, including what the students have learned from the volunteer efforts, will have the opportunity to win money for their favorite charity. This is a wonderful opportunity to complete a Type 3-Volunteering or Type 6 –Collaborating with the Community activity that will give back to the community.

Maximum Award: \$5,000 to winner's favorite charity

Eligibility: adults (parent, caregiver, or early childhood educator) volunteering with a child aged eight and younger

Deadline: February 29, 2008

<http://wondertime.go.com/contest/littlest-volunteers/index.html>



RECIPE OF THE MONTH:

DOUBLE-CHOCOLATE ROCKY ROAD COOKIE BARS



Submitted by Lacey Donatell

Cookie Base

1 Pouch Betty Crocker double chocolate chunk cookie mix
¼ c. Veg. oil
2 TBLS Water
1 Egg

Filling

1 8oz Package cream cheese softened
½ c. Sugar
¼ c. Butter softened
2 TBLS Flour
1 tsp vanilla
1 Egg
¼ c. chopped pecans
1 c. chocolate chips
1 ½ c. Mini Marshmallows

Frosting

½ c. Butter
¼ c. Unsweetened baking cocoa
1/3 c. Milk
3 c. Powdered sugar
1 tsp Vanilla
1 c. Chopped Pecans

Heat oven to 350. Spray bottom and sides of 13 x 9 pan with cooking spray.

In large bowl, stir cookie base ingredients until soft dough forms. Press dough in bottom of pan. Set aside.

In large bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar, butter, flour, vanilla and egg with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Stir in pecans. Spread over cookie base. Sprinkle with chocolate chips.

Bake 26-28 minutes or until filling is set. Sprinkle evenly with marshmallows. Bake 2 minutes longer.

In saucepan melt butter over medium heat. Stir in cocoa and milk. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly.

Remove from heat. With wire whisk, gradually stir in powdered sugar until well blended. Stir in vanilla and pecans. Immediately pour over marshmallows spreading gently to cover. Cool 30 minutes. Refrigerate 2 hours.

Have a favorite recipe you'd like to contribute to the **Recipe of the Month** section of January's newsletter? Email it to Betsy before the last week of December!



We're recruiting! Know anyone who would make a good VISTA? Spread the word. We are accepting applications until December 22nd. All positions start on February 8th.



CURRENT OPENINGS

- PARENTS PLUS, MILWAUKEE
- MPS CENTRAL OFFICE, MILWAUKEE
- OLGA BRENER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SHAWANO
- SCHOOL DISTRICT OF RHINELANDER, RHINELANDER